



News Release

Fishlake National Forest



For Immediate Release

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COMMAND TEAM ONBOARD TO MANAGE LOCAL FIRES

RICHFIELD, Utah—Fishlake National Forest fire officials have requested the assistance of a national Fire Use Management Team to take charge of three fires currently burning on the forest. They are the Meadow Creek fire on the Fillmore Ranger District, and the Blackbird Mine and Annabella fires on the Richfield Ranger District. All three were ignited by lightening strikes and range in size from 30 acres to 1,463 acres.

After the request was made by the local forest, the visiting Northern Rockies Fire Use Management Team was dispatched from the National Interagency Coordination Center in Boise, Idaho. Normally, all requests for additional resources are filled by the nearest available personnel. But in this case, the Fishlake's request for a team was referred nationally because there were no teams available in the Eastern Great Basin that had the special skills needed on the forest.

The Northern Rockies team specializes in managing fires for natural resource benefit. Chuck Stanich is the team's Incident Commander, but his normal duties are those of the Fire Management Officer on the Lolo National Forest in Montana. He said, "When a wildfire is ignited by a natural source, like lightening, it may be allowed to play its natural ecological role in an area where fire had been identified in the Forest Plan as a desirable component in that ecosystem."

The Black Bird Mine fire, currently 1,463 acres, and the Meadow Creek fire, 30 acres, will be monitored by the team to ensure that they meet the pre-determined objectives of reducing the amount of hazardous fuels already in the area, and restoring habitat for big game.

The Annabella Fire, estimated to be 50 acres, is the fire most visible to residents of the Sevier Valley. It's also burning years' worth of accumulation of heavy fuel, namely dead and down trees, in steep terrain that is too hazardous to ensure firefighter safety. For those reasons, Stanich's team is going to manage the suppression of this fire at naturally occurring boundaries.

Many of the nation's forests have become overgrown and unhealthy due to a lack of fire on the landscape. Managing the Black Bird Mine and Meadow Creek fires as naturally occurring, low-intensity fires is one way to help the Fishlake achieve the desired conditions identified in its Forest Plan. All decisions made by the Northern Rockies team will be based on the appropriateness of actions that will reduce losses due to wildfire, while ensuring the safety of civilians and firefighters.